

Assembly Bill No. 61

CHAPTER 170

An act to add and repeal Chapter 6.2 (commencing with Section 1962) of Division 2.5 of the Streets and Highways Code, and to amend Sections 21251 and 21260 of the Vehicle Code, relating to neighborhood electric vehicles.

[Approved by Governor August 4, 2011. Filed with
Secretary of State August 4, 2011.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 61, Jeffries. Neighborhood electric vehicles.

Existing law defines "low-speed vehicle" for purposes of the Vehicle Code as a motor vehicle, other than a motor truck, with 4 wheels that is capable of a minimum speed of 20 miles per hour and a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour on a paved level surface and that has a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 3,000 pounds. Existing law imposes certain restrictions on the use of low-speed vehicles on public streets and highways, and generally requires an operator of a low-speed vehicle to have a driver's license. A low-speed vehicle is also known as a neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV). A violation of the Vehicle Code is an infraction, unless otherwise specified.

Existing law authorizes certain local agencies to establish a NEV transportation plan subject to certain requirements. A person operating a NEV in a plan area in violation of certain provisions is guilty of an infraction punishable by a fine not exceeding \$100.

This bill would authorize the County of Riverside or any city in the county to establish a similar NEV transportation plan for a plan area that may include any applicable portion of the county or city, as specified, subject to the same penalties. The bill would require the plan to be submitted to the department for review and approval. The bill would require a report to the Legislature by January 1, 2016, if the county adopts a plan. The bill would repeal these provisions on January 1, 2017. Because the bill would create a new crime, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Chapter 6.2 (commencing with Section 1962) is added to Division 2.5 of the Streets and Highways Code, to read:

CHAPTER 6.2. NEIGHBORHOOD ELECTRIC VEHICLE TRANSPORTATION
PLAN FOR THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

1962. It is the intent of the Legislature, in enacting this chapter, to authorize the County of Riverside or any city in the county to establish a neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV) transportation plan. The purpose of this NEV transportation plan is to further the vision of creating a sustainable development that reduces gasoline demand and vehicle emissions by offering a cleaner, more economical means of local transportation within the plan area. It is the further intent of the Legislature that this NEV transportation plan be designed and developed to best serve the functional travel needs of the plan area, to have the physical safety of the NEV driver's person and property as a major planning component, and to have the capacity to accommodate NEV drivers of every legal age and range of skills.

1962.1. The following definitions apply to this chapter:

(a) "Plan area" means any portion of the County of Riverside, or any portion of any city in the county, and any streets and roads under the jurisdiction of the county or city, to the extent the county or city has adopted a NEV transportation plan pursuant to Section 1962.2, including the privately owned land of any owner that consents to its inclusion in the plan.

(b) "Neighborhood electric vehicle" or "NEV" means a low-speed vehicle as defined by Section 385.5 of the Vehicle Code.

(c) "NEV lanes" means all publicly or privately owned facilities that provide for NEV travel, including roadways designated by signs or permanent markings that are shared with pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motorists in the plan area.

1962.2. (a) The County of Riverside or any city in the county may, by ordinance or resolution, adopt a NEV transportation plan for the plan area within its jurisdiction. Two or more jurisdictions may jointly adopt a NEV transportation plan for all or a portion of the territory under their respective jurisdictions.

(b) The transportation plan shall have received a prior review and the comments of the Riverside County Transportation Commission and any agency having traffic law enforcement responsibilities in an entity included in the plan area.

(c) The transportation plan may include the use of a state highway, or any crossing of the highway, subject to the approval of the Department of Transportation.

1962.3. The transportation plan shall include, but need not be limited to, all of the following elements:

(a) Route selection, which includes a finding that the route will accommodate NEVs without an adverse impact upon traffic safety and will consider, among other things, the travel needs of commuters and other users.

(b) Transportation interfacing, which shall include, but not be limited to, coordination with other modes of transportation so that a NEV driver may employ multiple modes of transportation in reaching a destination in the plan area.

(c) Provision for NEV-related facilities, including, but not limited to, special access points, special NEV turnouts, and NEV crossings.

(d) Provisions for parking facilities at destination locations, including, but not limited to, community commercial centers, golf courses, public areas, and parks.

(e) Provisions for special paving, road markings, signage, and striping for NEV travel lanes, road crossings, parking, and circulation, as appropriate.

(f) Provisions for NEV electrical charging stations.

(g) NEV lanes for the purposes of the transportation plan shall be classified as follows:

(1) Class I NEV routes provide for a completely separate right-of-way for the use of NEVs.

(2) Class II NEV routes provide for a separate striped lane adjacent to roadways with speed limits of 55 miles per hour or less.

(3) Class III NEV routes provide for shared use by NEVs with conventional vehicle traffic on streets with speed limits of 35 miles per hour or less.

1962.4. If the County of Riverside or any city in the county adopts a NEV transportation plan for the plan area pursuant to Section 1962.2, it shall do all of the following:

(a) Establish minimum general design criteria for the development, planning, and construction of separated NEV lanes, including, but not limited to, the design speed of the facility, the space requirements of the NEV, and roadway design criteria, if the plan envisions separated NEV lanes.

(b) In cooperation with the department, establish uniform specifications and symbols for signs, markers, and traffic control devices to control NEV traffic; to warn of dangerous conditions, obstacles, or hazards; to designate the right-of-way as between NEVs, other vehicles, and bicycles, as may be applicable; to state the nature and destination of the NEV lane; and to warn pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists of the presence of NEV traffic.

(c) Submit the transportation plan to the director for approval following a review and recommendation by the California Traffic Control Devices Committee.

1962.5. If the County of Riverside or any city in the county adopts a NEV transportation plan for the plan area pursuant to this chapter, it shall also adopt all of the following as part of the plan:

(a) NEVs eligible to use NEV lanes shall meet the safety requirements for low-speed vehicles as set forth in Section 571.500 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(b) Minimum safety criteria for NEV operators, including, but not limited to, requirements relating to NEV maintenance and NEV safety. Operators shall be required to possess a valid California driver's license and to comply with the financial responsibility requirements established pursuant to Chapter 1 (commencing with Section 16000) of Division 7 of the Vehicle Code.

(c) (1) Restrictions limiting the operation of NEVs to NEV routes identified in the transportation plan, and allowing only those NEVs that meet the safety equipment requirements specified in the plan to be operated on those routes.

(2) Any person operating a NEV in the plan area in violation of this subdivision is guilty of an infraction punishable by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100).

1962.7. (a) If the County of Riverside or any city in the county adopts a NEV transportation plan for the plan area pursuant to this chapter, the county or city shall submit a report to the Legislature on or before January 1, 2016, in consultation with the Department of Transportation, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, and any applicable local law enforcement agency.

(b) The report shall include all of the following:

(1) A description of the NEV transportation plan and its elements that have been authorized up to that time.

(2) An evaluation of the effectiveness of the NEV transportation plan, including its impact on traffic flows and safety.

(3) A recommendation as to whether this chapter should be terminated, continued in effect, or expanded statewide.

1962.8. This chapter shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2017, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2017, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 2. Section 21251 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21251. Except as provided in Chapter 6.2 (commencing with Section 1962), Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 1963), Chapter 7.1 (commencing with Section 1964), Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 1965), and Chapter 8.1 (commencing with Section 1966) of Division 2.5 of the Streets and Highways Code, and Sections 4023, 21115, and 21115.1, a low-speed vehicle is subject to all the provisions applicable to a motor vehicle, and the driver of a low-speed vehicle is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a motor vehicle or other vehicle, when applicable, by this code or another code, with the exception of those provisions that, by their very nature, can have no application.

SEC. 3. Section 21260 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21260. (a) Except as provided in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b), or in an area where a neighborhood electric vehicle transportation plan has been adopted pursuant to Chapter 6.2 (commencing with Section 1962), Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 1963), Chapter 7.1 (commencing with Section 1964), Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 1965), or Chapter 8.1 (commencing with Section 1966) of Division 2.5 of the Streets and Highways

Code, the operator of a low-speed vehicle shall not operate the vehicle on any roadway with a speed limit in excess of 35 miles per hour.

(b) (1) The operator of a low-speed vehicle may cross a roadway with a speed limit in excess of 35 miles per hour if the crossing begins and ends on a roadway with a speed limit of 35 miles per hour or less and occurs at an intersection of approximately 90 degrees.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), the operator of a low-speed vehicle shall not traverse an uncontrolled intersection with any state highway unless that intersection has been approved and authorized by the agency having primary traffic enforcement responsibilities for that crossing by a low-speed vehicle.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.